



# COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSISTANCE TEAM

## Value in Collaboration: Finding a Future for Seven Ranches

Final Report  
Seven Ranches Area, Maricopa, AZ

June 15, 2012



American Planning Association

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*Cover Credit: Picture of Seven Ranches Area, effect and color added*

*Photo by Ryan Scherzinger*

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2012, the American Planning Association (APA), through its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), organized a Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) project in the Seven Ranches Area of Maricopa, AZ. Seven Ranches is the tenth community to participate in APA's Community Planning Assistance Teams initiative.

The project was selected from proposals submitted during CPAT's summer 2011 community application cycle. Kazi N. Haque, Planning Manager for the City of Maricopa, submitted the successful application and served as APA's primary community liaison throughout the effort.

Through a series of site visits, public meetings, and interviews, the Team - comprised by expert planners and urban designers with expertise matched to the specific challenges that Seven Ranches faces--conducted an intensive study of the community. Team members gained valuable insights from Seven Ranches and Maricopa residents, stakeholders, and people with a genuine interest in the community's past, present, and future.

This report presents the Team's findings, observations, and recommendations for the residents of Seven Ranches Area and the City of Maricopa to consider as they decide how to move forward as a community.

### The Purpose of the CPAT

Community assistance is built into the professional role of a planner. One principle of the *AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* states that certified planners shall aspire to seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration." Yet another principle is that certified planners should aspire to "contribute time and effort to groups lacking in adequate planning resources and to voluntary professional activities."

In service to these values, the American Planning Association (APA) and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), developed the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) initiative.

The purpose of the Community Planning Assistance Team initiative is to serve communities facing limited resources by helping them address planning issues such as social equity and affordability, economic development, sustainability, consensus building, and urban design. By pairing expert urban planning professionals from around the country with citizen planners from local communities, the initiative seeks to foster education, engagement, and empowerment.

As part of the Teams' goals, each CPAT community develops a vision plan that promotes a sustainable, livable, economically vibrant, and healthy urban environment.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Team prepared this report after studying the CPAT application and materials prepared by the City of Maricopa; meeting with residents, advocates, stakeholders, officials, and private sector representatives; conducting field investigations of Seven Ranches and Maricopa; and extensive discussion and evaluation of the varied possibilities and concerns. We offer this report as a reference document for all those interested in the potential of Seven Ranches and the community of Maricopa.

The full report organization presents:

- A project overview and background on the CPAT program;
- A summary evaluation of the context and influences for the Seven Ranches Area;
- Observations as a foundation for the Team's recommendations;
- Suggested recommendations on roadways, drainage, possible development scenarios, and collaborative steps forward; and
- A summary of the Team's conclusions.

The CPAT program provides an independent, professional, 3rd-party planning analysis and suggested planning approach. *It is not a definitive plan, but information, analysis and suggestions on how to plan Seven Ranches.* Seven Ranches is a rural outpost and fragmented - both in terms of property conditions and opinions about future growth and opportunity. However, Seven Ranches presents significant opportunities for property owners and the Maricopa community if detrimental fragmentations can be overcome with a collaborative planning process and plan.

Seven Ranches is currently surrounded by existing or planned suburban development. Development in and around Seven Ranches is influenced by a multiple of factors both external and internal to Maricopa. After the current economic correction, suburbanization will likely only intensify making current Seven Ranches conditions more divergent/incompatible/distinct. This divergence could potentially reduce opportunities for both property owners and the community.

It was observed that the City and Seven Ranches property owners have a brief opportunity to catch a breath before development conditions move upward and start a dialog to collaboratively and more comprehensively plan for Seven Ranches.

In attempting to define unifying and divergent issues, the CPAT conducted a visual preference survey of attendees at a community meeting. In general, there was an attraction to 'people places' for shopping, eating, and entertaining. Development quality, parks, trails and quality open space were also attractive. Development density was not uniformly disliked. The desire for single family detached homes was split. There is an opportunity to create a community focal point in Seven Ranches that is very convenient to current and planned surrounding residences, and significant new developments such as the City Hall Complex and Catholic Church project. Seven Ranches has significant location advantages. However these advantages can disappear if Seven Ranches highly fragmented property ownership and distrust in collaboration, marginal piecemeal infrastructure development, and uncoordinated incremental development continue to define the potential of Seven Ranches.

Observed challenges to development of Seven Ranches include parcel fragmentation and limited infrastructure. Yet while circulation, water, wastewater and drainage conditions are limiting factors today, they are not insurmountable obstacles. Obtaining high quality and valued development for Seven Ranches property owners and Maricopa is possible if cooperative, collaborative and comprehensive planning can start.

The CPAT provided several recommendations as ideas to start a cooperative, collaborative and comprehensive planning process. Ideas for conceptual layouts of drainage and circulation respected the fragmented parcelization of Seven Ranches and provided for productive connection with surrounding development. Circulation and drainage concepts provide a framework and starting point to discuss collaborative infrastructure and development planning by groups of property owners if desired. The circulation and drainage concepts also provide a conceptual framework for the coordination of key infrastructure by the City. The concepts are organized around a reasonable development area of about 40 acres or more that can support infrastructure development efficiencies, This size seemed reasonable for property owner collaboration, and provides a sufficiently definable development area that can be well coordinated with adjacent land to optimize development value. To illustrate potential opportunities based on this conceptual circulation and drainage framework, three development value scenarios were developed. These scenarios are completely conceptual, but illustrate how property owner coordination and collaboration can provide more efficient opportunities to resolve infrastructure constraints and achieve a range of development potentials for property owners and the City.

The suggested next steps for interested property owners, supportive adjacent citizens and property owners, and the City is to start a respectful dialogue as a Seven Ranches Development Advisory Group. There was mistrust, and in some cases uninformed opinions, expressed to the CPAT that are critical barriers to forging the cooperative and collaborative solutions that the interconnected situations in Seven Ranches require. Although there are some true differences in opinions and desires, we heard more shared and common goals. What was missing was collaborative reasoned discussion focused on shared goals and cooperation and how different desires can be respectfully addressed.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Seven Ranches project began in October 2011 when APA staff worked with Kazi N. Haque, Planning Manager, Rodolfo Lopez, Planner I, and Brent Billingsley, Development Services Director for the City of Maricopa, to identify the expertise needed for the project. Particular areas of focus included consensus building, implementation, and urban design. From this set of desired expertise, Team member selection began starting with the team leader, Sue Schwartz, FAICP.

On December 18, the Team Leader, Sue Schwartz, FAICP, and APA Senior Outreach Associate, Ryan Scherzinger, traveled to Maricopa for an initial visit. During the visit, Schwartz and Scherzinger toured Seven Ranches Area and Maricopa. They also met with various City staff representing different departments to discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with the Seven Ranches study area. Following the meeting, Schwartz and Scherzinger attended a special joint session of the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to introduce the CPAT project and gather feedback. After explaining the intent of a CPAT, which is to provide an independent, professional, 3rd party planning analysis and suggested planning approach, the Councilmembers and Commissioners provided useful background information and ideas related to Seven Ranches.

APA staff organized conference calls with the Team prior to visiting Seven Ranches to discuss the project. Team members used the application submitted by the City to guide initial discussions. After compiling and organizing relevant materials (local history, proposed site plans of adjacent developments, existing plans and ordinances, current conditions, a list of stakeholders, etc.) with the help of the City and other local entities, APA staff compiled the briefing book to study and reference throughout the project.

The full Team arrived in Maricopa on February 22. Upon arrival, team members toured the Seven Ranches Area and Maricopa. Following the tour, the team met with several representatives from utility companies. They then prepared for a community meeting, which was held at the Sequoia Pathway Academy, located in the Seven Ranches area. After the team explained why the team was invited to Maricopa, over fifty Seven Ranches and Maricopa residents participated in a visual preference survey. Team member, Craig Farmer, FAICP, presented a series of photographs that demonstrated different housing typologies, commercial areas, open spaces, road designs, and other examples of place to help the team gauge residents' general desires for Seven Ranches. Farmer used an electronic polling system, whereby attendees used handheld devices to vote individually on each picture. Following the survey, residents were invited to write their hopes, concerns, as well as any barriers they see that exist for the future development of Seven Ranches on flip charts set up just outside the meeting room. An additional flip chart was set up for attendees to leave their name, contact information, and a good time to contact them during the team's visit. Team member followed up with attendees who left their contact information. The event generated many informal conversations between Team members and residents that shed light on the myriad existing perspectives in the community. In some instances, residents met and talked for the first time during the meeting.

The following day, Thursday, February 23, the Team met individually with residents and other stakeholders. During the remainder of the time, the Team analyzed the data, gathered additional Information, and generated a presentation to report back to the community. The preliminary findings and recommendations were presented in a public meeting on Saturday, February 25, at the same location as the first community meeting (Sequoia Pathway Academy). The presentation was met by comments and questions from the community members and other stakeholders in attendance. The presentation was then made available on the APA website to solicit further feedback for the Team's final report.

From this process, the team generated an overall vision with a set of different options and general



recommendations intended to inform and assist residents, local stakeholders, and government agencies as they move forward with any formal planning processes. This final report of the Team's findings was delivered to APA's primary contact and author of the original CPAT application, Kazi Haque, to distribute to Seven Ranches residents, City of Maricopa leaders, community members, and local/regional stakeholders.

## BACKGROUND

### Local History

Native American communities established deep agricultural roots that define Maricopa's history. The written history of Maricopa dates back to 1694 when it was referenced in a journal entry by a Jesuit missionary, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino. He described an established agricultural community of Native Americans who were established traders in the region. Kino devoted his life to building missions and extending the influence of the church, but also to finding a southern land passage to California. Kino located the trail as far west as the Colorado River, but died in 1711. The first overland route to California wasn't fully realized by the Spaniards until 1774 after numerous expeditions. The area of Maricopa was situated along what became known to historians as the "Gila Trail" (a reference to the various southern trails California-bound travelers took that generally, with some exceptions, converged at or near the Pima Indian villages on the Gila River).

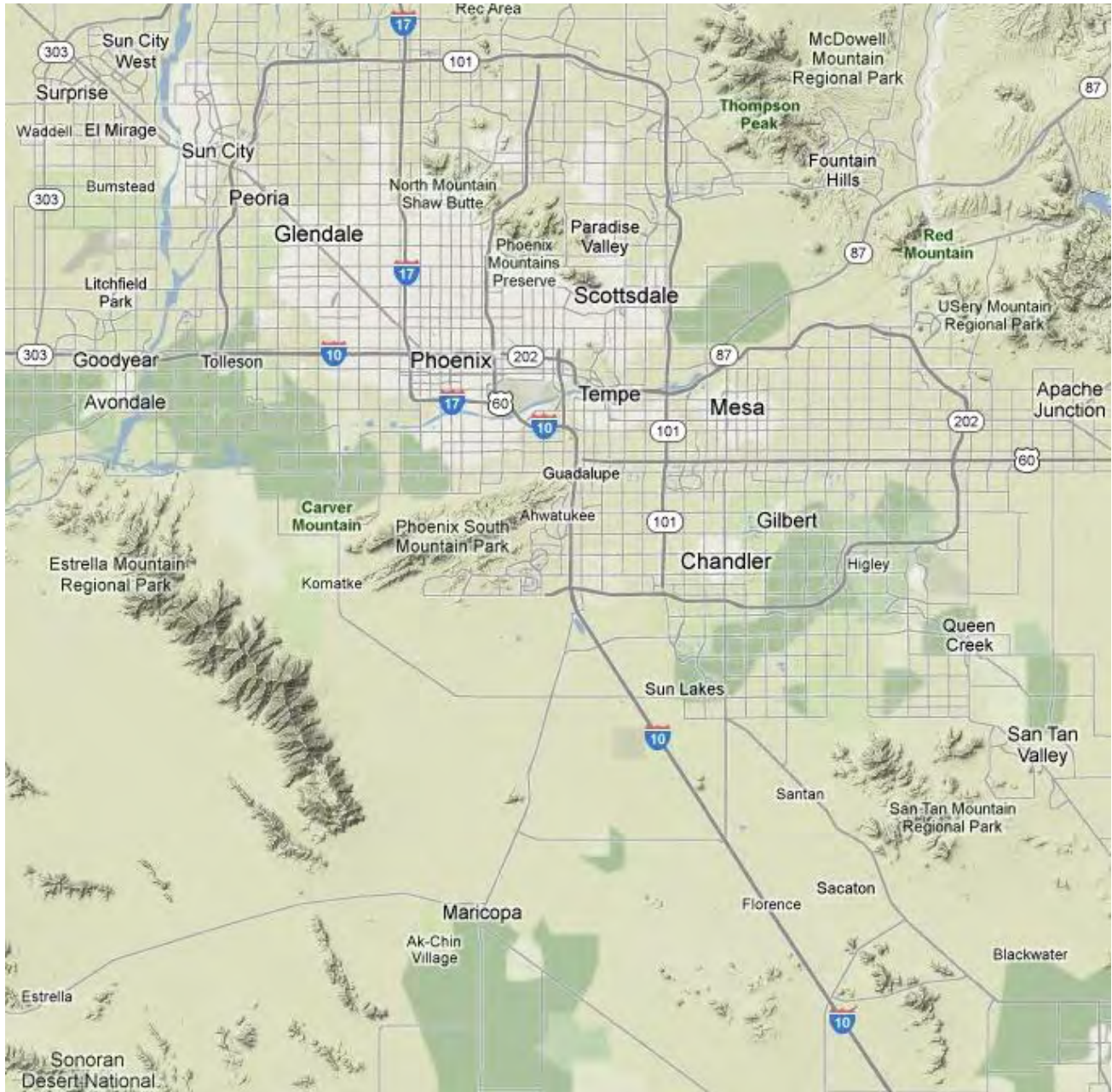
The place eventually called "Maricopa Wells" was an important stop on a fast-growing transportation route. Transportation improved rapidly as the rush to California accelerated. The newly-acquired southwestern region began to attract many American settlers. Maricopa Wells was a dependable source of water during the mid-1800s and soon became an important and famous stage stop. Travelers along the Butterfield Stage Line, which stretched from San Antonio to San Diego, stopped there for food, water, and care for their animals.

In the latter part of the 19th century, two railroad lines ran through Maricopa - the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Maricopa & Phoenix Railroad (M&P), which established it as an important junction. Eventually, the M&P was closed by Southern Pacific in 1935 after continued problems with flooding and unreliable service as a result. The old rail bed of the defunct M&P is now covered by the main arterial roadway of Maricopa, Maricopa Road (also known as State Route 347 and the John Wayne Parkway).

Maricopa's loss of rail service to the north in 1935 quieted much of the new economic activity that the railroad provided. Agricultural production, however, remained strong and continued to thrive throughout the 20th century. Cotton, grains, fruit, vegetables, and beef thrive in the arid desert and made Maricopa one of the most productive farm communities in the state. Cotton reigned during the 1950-60s and brought many cotton pickers from the Midwest and Mexico. Developers acquired large tracts of land during the 1970-80s who subdivided it into more affordable, three and one-third acre mini-farms, which increased the number of residents.

The growth of metropolitan Phoenix drove the more recent explosion of growth in Maricopa (*Images 1 & 2* below are aerial photographs of the area in 2002 and 2010; also see *Map 1* below to see Maricopa in relation to Phoenix). The 2000 Census estimated a population of just over 1,000 residents. Just ten years later, that number rose dramatically to over 43,000. Amidst the unprecedented growth, Maricopa incorporated in 2003. As the now well-known story goes, the boom growth was followed by the housing market crash. This left a number of so-called "zombie," or partially built, subdivisions throughout the City. Infrastructure and retaining walls exist without any structures in many cases. Economic development, however, did not increase at the same rate as the residential boom and much of the agricultural land gave way to the Phoenix-centric suburban expansion. Maricopa also borders the Gila River Indian Community to the north and the Ak-Chin Indian Community to the south, almost completely surrounded (see *Map 2* below), which adds a unique dynamic to

the City's economic competitiveness. The unprecedented growth of Maricopa brought new opportunities to the area, but also a list of new and unprecedented challenges. Likewise, the Seven Ranches area is uniquely situated in Maricopa and poses both opportunities and challenges, as this report will show.



Map 1: Maricopa is approximately 35 miles south of Phoenix. Source: Google Maps



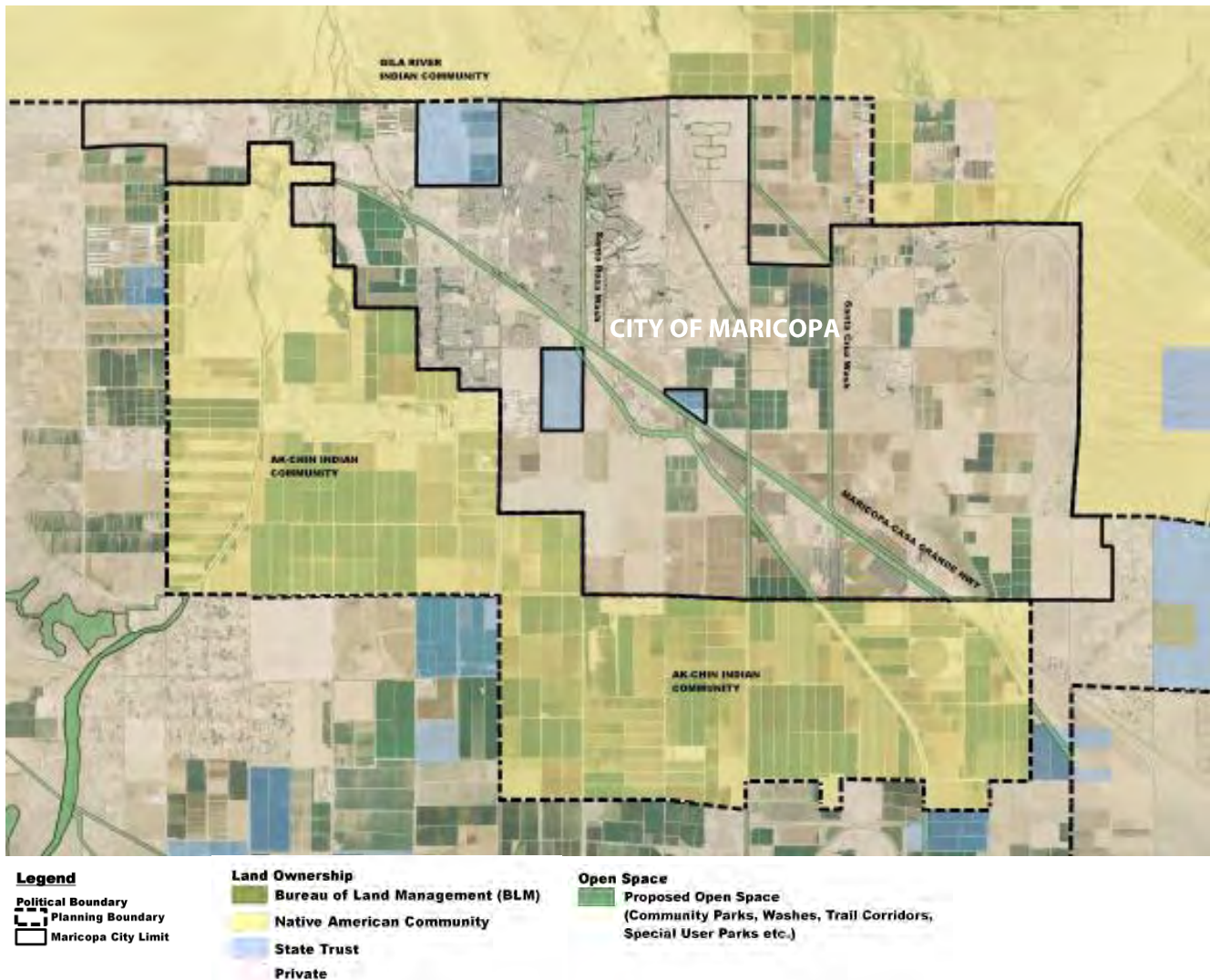


*Image 1:* Aerial of Maricopa taken in 2002, early in the area's growth. Much of the area was still used for agricultural purposes. Compare this with *Image 2* below as a visual aid in understanding the rapid population growth in Maricopa during the 2000s. Source: City of Maricopa/Todd Photographic





*Image 2: Aerial of Maricopa taken in 2010. Many residential subdivisions and other developments occurred during the 2000s as the population soared from 1,000 in the year 2000 to over 43,000 in 2010. Far from gone, agricultural land is still found in many areas in and around the City. Source: City of Maricopa/Todd Photographic*



Map 2: The City of Maricopa's boundaries are represented by the solid black lines. The Gila River (to the north) and Ak-Chin (to the south) Indian Communities are both highlighted in yellow. The two Indian Communities almost completely encompass Maricopa. Source: *City of Maricopa Open Space Map*

## Description of the Seven Ranches Study Area

The Seven Ranches Area is referred to in Maricopa's first and current *General Plan* (adopted January 17, 2006) as a "Special Planning Area" and is described as follows:

Historically a rural residential enclave, the Seven Ranches has been broken into smaller land parcels creating significant obstacles to any coordinated development other than low density residential. Property maintenance and aesthetic issues serve as a disincentive for investment. The General Plan supports consolidation of smaller parcels to foster orderly redevelopment. For smaller parcels, low density residential is encouraged, while consolidated, non-residential development and related rezoning requests on parcels five acres or greater should be supported.

Seven Ranches is also mentioned In the City's *Strategic Plan (2011-2014)* under the heading, "Build high-quality developments and public amenities." Under this heading, the *Strategic Plan* states, "Initiate a redevelopment planning study for the Seven Ranches Special Planning Area as defined in the Maricopa General Plan." The Seven Ranches Area's geographic location within Maricopa can be seen in Map 3 below. Also see Map 4 below for an aerial of the Seven Ranches Area.





Map 3: The Seven Ranches Area is outlined in red. Maricopa's city boundaries are represented in purple. Source: Google Earth

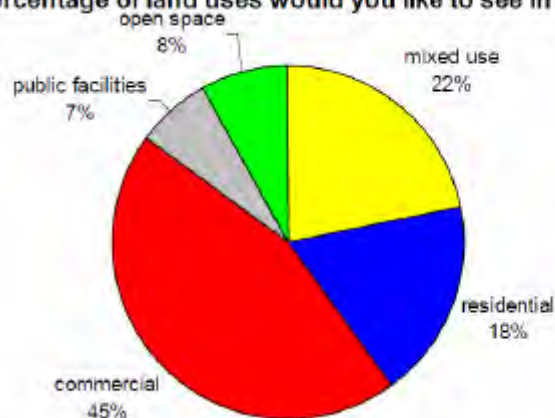


Map 4: An aerial of the Seven Ranches Area. Source: Google Earth



In the summer of 2009, the City conducted a survey among stakeholders in the Seven Ranches Area to find out what the local community wanted to see in the area. The survey was administered to a total of 55 people, the majority of which were owners within the Seven Ranches Area. A few adjacent owners were also included. The survey generated only a modest response rate (27%), but the results captured some of the existing ideas in the community. The majority of the residents reported that they lived in the area prior to the incorporation of the City. The majority also reported having no awareness of the "city's future plans for the Seven Ranches Area (General Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, Trails and Open Space Plan)." Most respondents also agreed that a planning study is important for Seven Ranches. While the views were very mixed, many responses indicated a negative reaction to the recent changes to Seven Ranches since the Incorporation of the City. The survey showed a relatively high demand for commercial land uses in Seven Ranches, as illustrated in *Chart 1* below.

*Chart 1: What percentage of land uses would you like to see in the Seven Ranches Area?*



Source: City of Maricopa Planning Division's Seven Ranches Survey Report (Fall 2009).

The Seven Ranches Area was declared a "colonia" on October 27, 1999 and was re-certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2011. According to HUD, the definition of a colonia is "any identifiable community in the U.S.-Mexico border regions of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas that is determined to be a colonia on the basis of objective criteria, including lack of a potable water supply, inadequate sewage systems, and a shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary housing. The border region means the area within 150 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border excluding Metropolitan Statistical Areas with populations exceeding one million." Special funding became available through the Arizona Department of Housing recently. The City worked with the Seven Ranches Water District to collaborate on a grant application that would help fund some of the water infrastructure issues in the area, but it was not selected.

Infrastructure in Seven Ranches is very poor. A private water provider, the Seven Ranches Water District, serves the Seven Ranches Area. The water district, however, cannot provide the minimum fire flow requirements, which poses serious challenges for new development needing to meet current fire codes. Roads are unpaved, which creates severe dust and air quality issues. The roads also flood when it rains due to a lack of a proper drainage system making some roads impassable at times (see *Images 3-4* below). Impassable roads are a major public safety issue when considering emergency fire and medical services. Roads within Seven Ranches are also not aligned with adjacent streets and new subdivisions. As an example, the new charter school within Seven Ranches, Pathway Sequoia, was delayed for more than a year because of the challenges it faced with water and sewers.



Images 3-4: Pictures of Seven Ranches Area roads after an episode of rain. With no drainage system in place, the unpaved roads flood after it rains creating public safety issues. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*

Seven Ranches is dotted with "for sale" signs (see *Images 5-8* below). Many of the property owners don't live in Seven Ranches and are seeking to sell their property. Seven Ranches is broken up into many small parcels, however. The small parcel sizes create yet another challenge for new development since they limit the possibilities of larger-scale projects (see *Map 5* below for a parcel map).

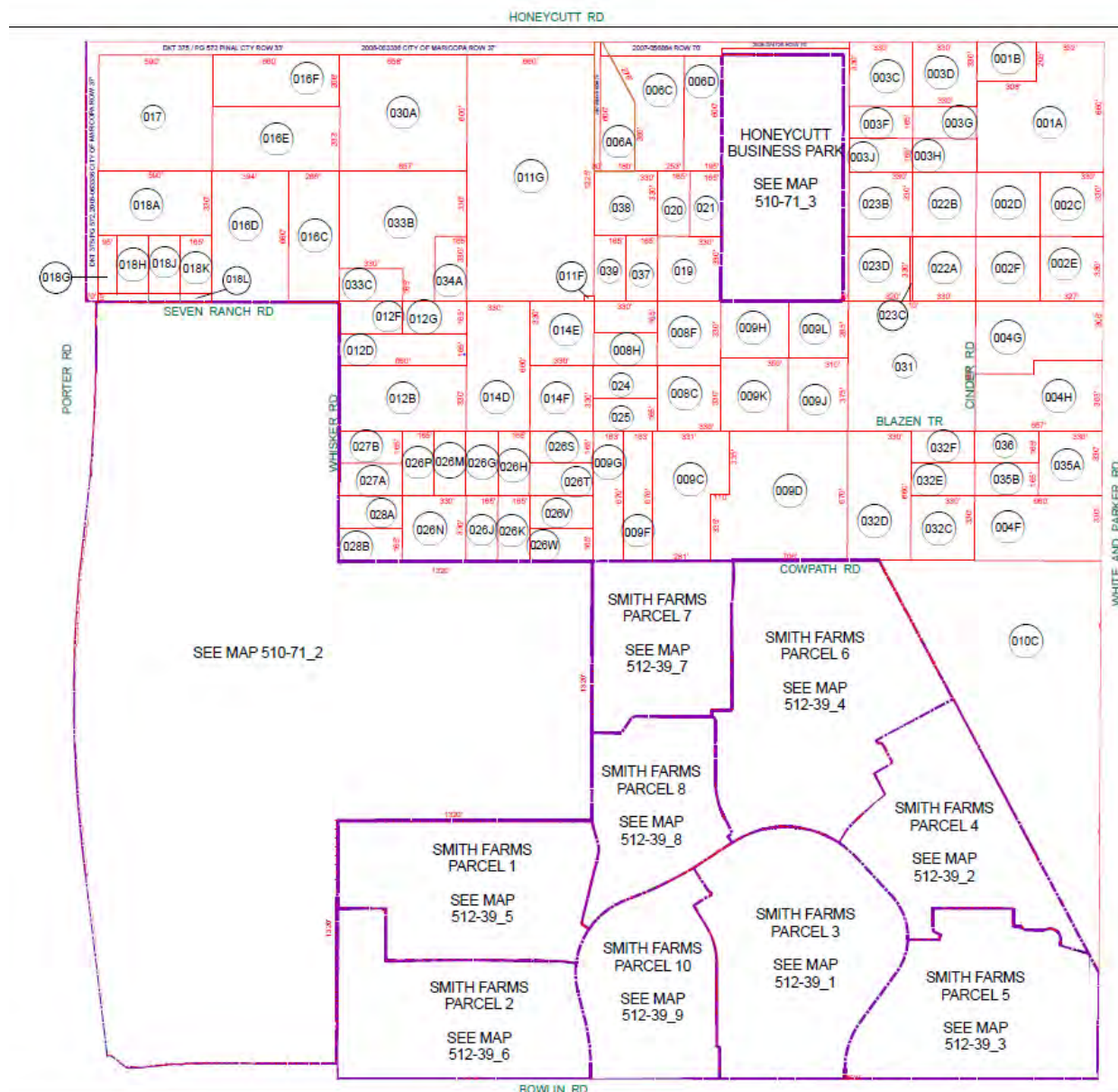


Images 5-8: Many "for sale" signs are currently posted around the Seven Ranches Area. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*

In June 2010, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church submitted a Planned Area Development (PAD) proposal that will be built on the southwest corner of Seven Ranches (refer to *Map 5*). Several revisions of the plan with the City are now complete. The plan seeks to incorporate form-based elements for the development and requires re-zoning the property for higher uses. According to the proposed master plan, the PAD "is intended to create a sustainable, high Intensity, mixed use neighborhood to provide a whole new type of development in the City of Maricopa." The development will be anchored by a new parish church and K-8



parochial school, followed by other civic structures such as a library and a post office. Other proposed uses include single- and multi-family residential, commercial, and green spaces.

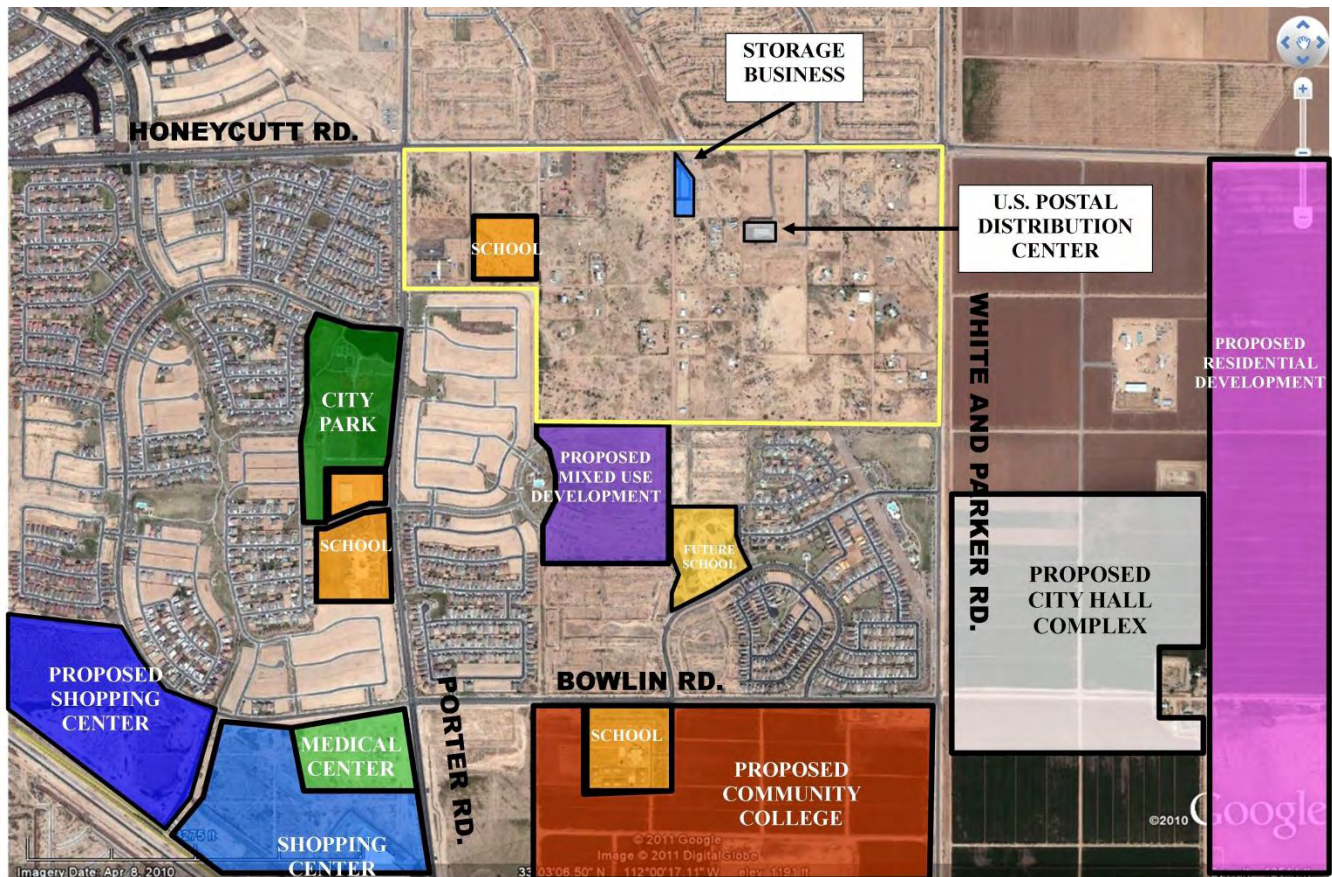


Map 5: Parcel map of the Seven Ranches Area at top in red, which is 280 acres total. Part of the open space on the southwest corner along Cowpath Road, which is 34.11 acres, is where the Our Lady of Grace Planned Area Development (PAD) will be built.  
Source: Pinal County Assessor

Many of the adjacent areas to Seven Ranches are seeing or will see new development in the near future (see Map 6 below). Inside of Seven Ranches already, a new charter school, a storage business, and U.S. Postal Distribution Center have been built. Several residential and mixed use developments are underway, including the Our Lady of Grace PAD described above. Just to the southeast, a new City Hall is very close to breaking ground. A community college, Central Arizona College, a 217-acre site to the south is almost ready to begin construction. A medical center is nearly complete and two shopping centers are on their way. A very attractive park, called Pacana Park, lies just to the west of Seven Ranches. Several schools are also planned in close



proximity to the area. Despite the economic downturn in recent years, Maricopa is still growing in many ways and Seven Ranches is experiencing the effects of growth all around it.



Map 6: New (proposed and existing) development around the Seven Ranches Area. Source: Google Map created by City of Maricopa

## CONTEXT AND INFLUENCE

Time does not stand still and few, if any, places operate in isolation. In an interconnected, global environment and economy, creating positive and productive connections to surrounding context and influences is increasingly important.

As examples, global oil prices can influence local transportation costs and housing decisions and global labor costs can influence business investment decisions.

National and statewide demographic changes, private sector and governmental investments and expenditures, and monetary and taxation policies influence in general and sometimes locally-focused ways. More close to home, the regional context and influences of Phoenix and Tribal nation neighbors (Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities) create opportunities and challenges in addressing economic and development trends.

As a community, Maricopa can make local community choices on how to grow, develop, and adapt to these surrounding and continually evolving contextual influences. Maricopa has several forms of local governance that take responsibility for various parts of the community. City government deals with most, but not all community resources. School districts address education needs and quality; and independent or private utility districts are responsible for providing services essential for safety and growth. In some instances, there are community and business organizations, ownership organizations, and private neighborhood maintenance organizations such as homeowner associations that help manage and organize solutions to community issues.

Seven Ranches, as an area and an association of property owners, businesses and residents, is influenced by this surrounding context and, in turn, has an influence on its surroundings. The extent of any area or site's influence is proportional to the reach and connectivity it has with its surroundings. The influence of a church, school, college, medical center, or other community use, for instance, extends to and connects its entire service area, which presents opportunities for adjacent and nearby sites to positively and productively connect to and relate to its influence.

The development community acts in response to the context and influences it sees in various communities by identifying the best development site values and creating the most (potentially) valuable development plans. Value is relative in that attractive development time, land, and infrastructure costs are influenced by the ultimate value of the finished development and the relative value and quality of the community surrounding the development. Developers typically view land as a residual cost, whereby the value of land is established after the costs of infrastructure, construction, marketing, and profit are subtracted from the selling or rental price. The selling and rental price is significantly influenced by the selling or rental prices of surrounding development and the quality of adjacent and surrounding community infrastructure and services.

This is commonly understood—that quality begets quality; and quality is, by definition, more highly valued. The multi-layered, contextual influences are particularly important for Seven Ranches due to the fragmented ownership and infrastructure environment. However, there is great potential for value creation given some of the special surrounding influences that can create special opportunities for Seven Ranches.

The key to tapping his potential value is developing a common understanding and cost effective, coordinated, and optimally collaborative, approach for the future. A planning and program approach can help achieve this by providing a guide to various individual, organizational and community decisions as Seven Ranches develops over time.

## OBSERVATIONS

### City of Maricopa

Maricopa did an admirable job in keeping up with infrastructure during the building boom of the past decade. There is much high quality development, a growing list of public facilities and amenities, and many examples of good planning and design. While building activity has dropped precipitously from peak levels, the long term outlook for growth in the region, and Maricopa, appears to be positive. The current slowdown could be an opportunity for the City to “catch” its breath and plan for the future.

The City is on sound footing financially and capable of making strategic investments to take advantage of the opportunities. Forward-thinking policies have been put in place for water conservation, flood management, and the provision of parks, trails and bike lanes that will yield downstream dividends (see *Images 9-10* below as an example).



*Images 9-10: Many of Maricopa’s newer subdivisions were built with water conservation in mind. Strategies included permanent infrastructure for grey water, whereby reclaimed water is channeled to reservoirs like this one. The fountains act as both a public amenity with the park built around it and serve as a part of the grey water system, since the fountains circulate the water and keep it from going stagnate before it is ultimately re-used for irrigation and other uses. Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*

Several key building projects will soon be coming online that will be significant community assets. A new City Hall and a recreation complex will serve as key activity centers, while a new community college and a health care facility will bring new jobs and residents to Maricopa. A mixed-use development project proposed by Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church will present a good test of a new development product in the local market.

By and large, Maricopa’s population is well-educated and engaged in volunteerism. A recent *Buy Local* campaign was highly successful, indicating further potential for entrepreneurship and business development. An untapped resource could be the expertise of the retiree population.

As a very young city, Maricopa’s identity is still evolving, physically, economically, and socially. Even though there are amenities and exemplary developments and projects, there are still gaps in the community fabric. Chief among these is the lack of a clear community focal point. Without a singular “people place,” Maricopa may face a disadvantage in competing with other communities in the region for jobs and residents, particularly as its housing starts to age.

The current land use mix, dominated by single family housing, may leave the City vulnerable to shifts in demographics, public preferences and economics. “Traditional” households—families with school aged kids—are a decreasing share of the overall population. The lack of housing options—primarily multi-family rental options, may make the city less attractive for singles and retirees. Even though the oversupply of single



family housing means that rentals are available, this may not be the most desirable option for, say, college students.

Maricopa also appears to have significant “leakage” of retail purchases and lacks a strong local employment base. Rising gas prices could leave the city further vulnerable as the cost of commuting will increase and the City’s auto-oriented land use patterns and infrastructure make multi-modal transportation options difficult. The economics of development have also changed since the boom and the City may need a new paradigm. Financing is tighter and future projects will likely be smaller in scale. Good planning and an engaged, informed community will be necessary to support the planning and public-private partnerships that will be necessary to ensure that the “whole” created by smaller projects will be greater than the sum of the parts.

## Seven Ranches Area

The Seven Ranches area is situated at the nexus of several of the significant new projects getting underway in the city and the right type of development there could create synergies with each of them. As a largely undeveloped site with few streets, it also represents a chance for Maricopa to try something new.

One of the biggest barriers to developing the site is the lack of infrastructure, water, sewer and roads. In particular, the water and wastewater issues are complicated by having various service providers, public and private, who would have to agree on a solution and come up with the resources to pay off a previous federal loan. However, while the infrastructure issues are complicated, they do not seem insurmountable.

Another barrier is that there are multiple property owners, and land parcels are generally small. Achieving consensus on a unified plan for the area may be difficult, as the owners have different and, in some case, perhaps unrealistic expectations about the potential value of their property and its highest and best use.

A number of the residents and property owners expressed distrust of the City of Maricopa, both during the public meetings and in individual interviews. It seems clear that establishing better communications between the City and the study area stakeholders will be an essential step in formulating a unified vision for the area. Additionally, a better understanding is needed of the appropriate, and realistic, roles for the City and developers in any sort of development scenario.

There is also a threat that, as time passes, incremental decision-making and development decisions could diminish the potential returns to property owners and the benefits to the City as a whole. However, based on discussion with property owners and residents, the inevitability of change for this area is largely understood and accepted. We hope that the discussion generated by the CPAT visit is a useful starting point for the City and the stakeholders and offer the following recommendations for moving forward.

## Visual Character Survey

During the CPAT’s visit, the team conducted a *visual character survey* (VCS) among the residents who attended the community meeting in the evening of Wednesday, February 22. A VCS is a survey of immediate visual preference and helps define what is appropriate and desirable for Maricopa and Seven Ranches. The results are used to clarify vision and guide plan recommendations.

For this exercise, residents were each given handheld devices to vote with (see *Images 11-12* below) while the team moved through a set of images and questions.





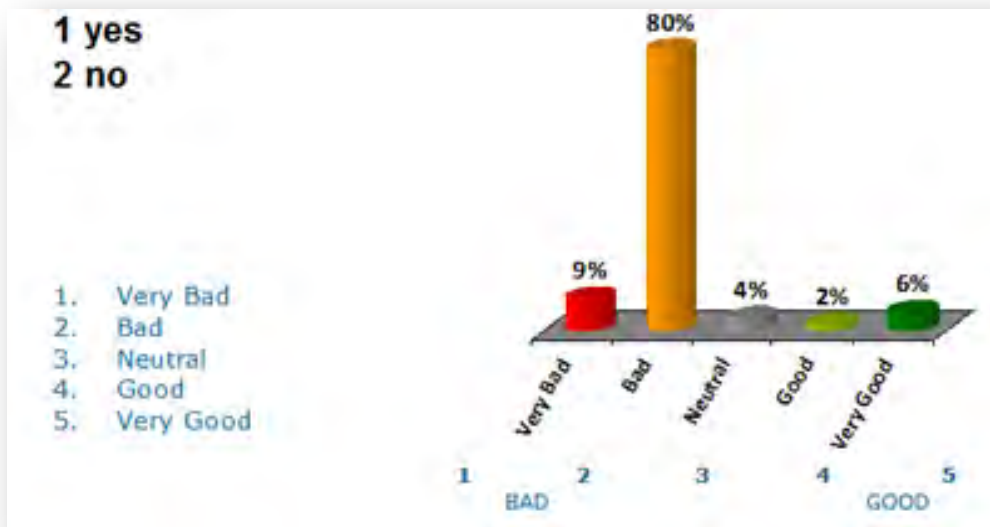
*Images 11-12: On left, team member, Craig Farmer, FAICP, guided residents through the visual character survey. On right, the instant polling devices residents used to vote on each image and question.*

Participants in the VCS were given the following instructions for voting:

- 1 = bad, 3 = neutral, 5 = good
- To assign a value, the following questions were asked:
  - Do I like or dislike the image?
  - By what value do I like or dislike the image?
  - Is it appropriate or inappropriate for the City?

The following are select examples from the VCS where the voting results indicated clear majorities or important-to-note divisions:

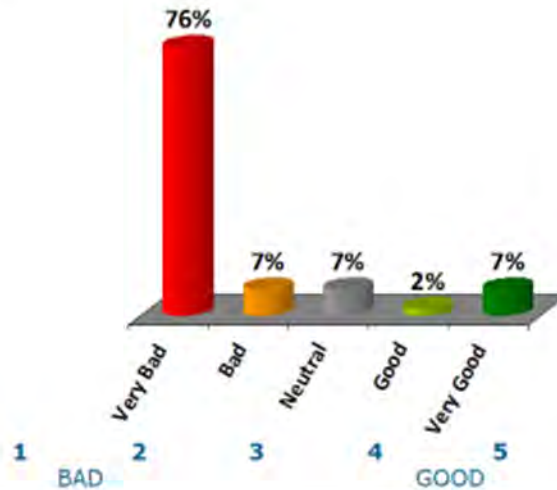
**There are enough places to shop, eat out, and entertainment in Maricopa.**



- Almost everyone (89%) felt that there are not enough places to shop, eat out, and entertainment in Maricopa.

## There are enough “People Places” in Maricopa

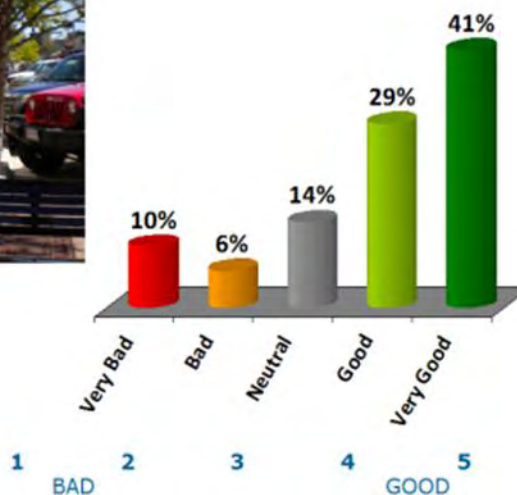
1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good



- "People places" was left undefined. The vast majority of residents felt that Maricopa definitely doesn't have enough of them, however.

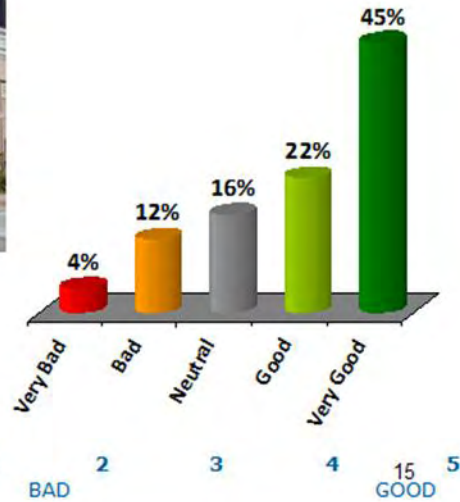


1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good



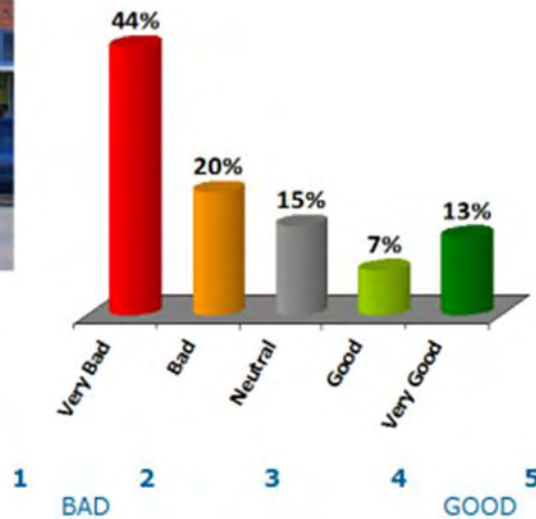
- Most (70%) responded positively to this photo showing a pedestrian-friendly street with shopping and outdoor benches.





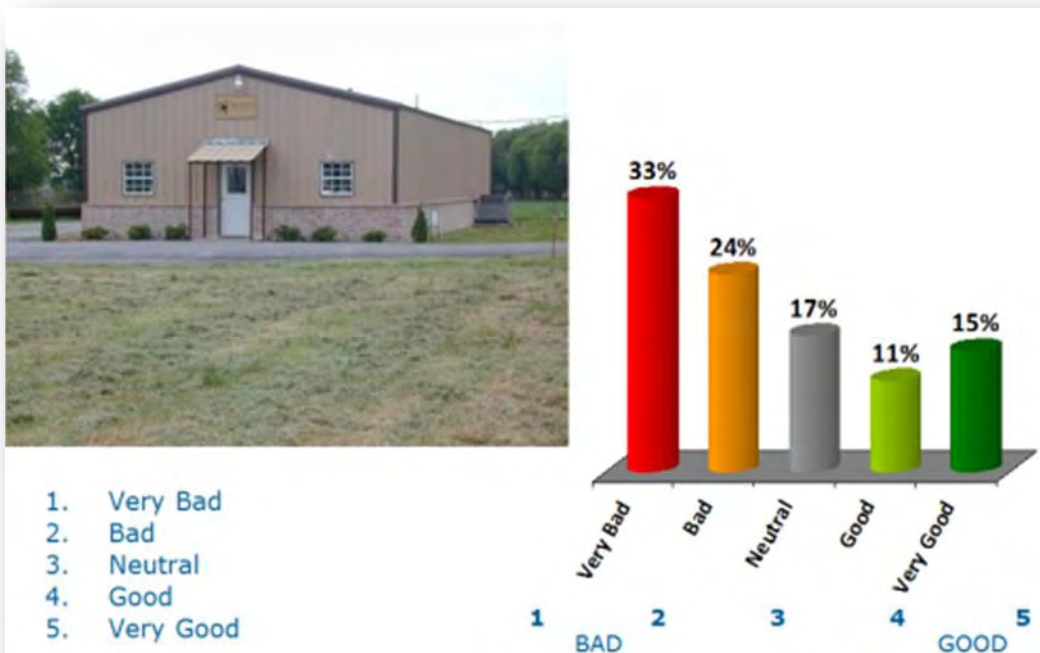
1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good

- Two-thirds favorably viewed this traditional style building and streetscape.

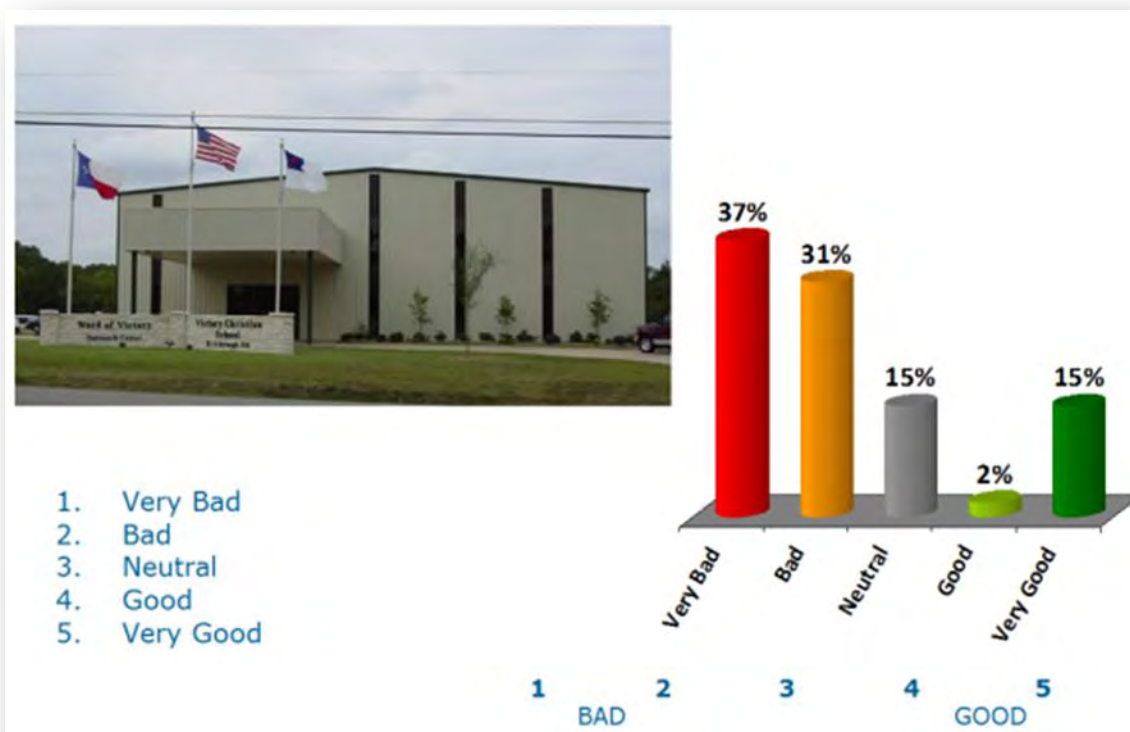


1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good

- The image shown here is a somewhat classic historic downtown. It received a very low acceptance rating showing that not all “traditional” looks were preferred.

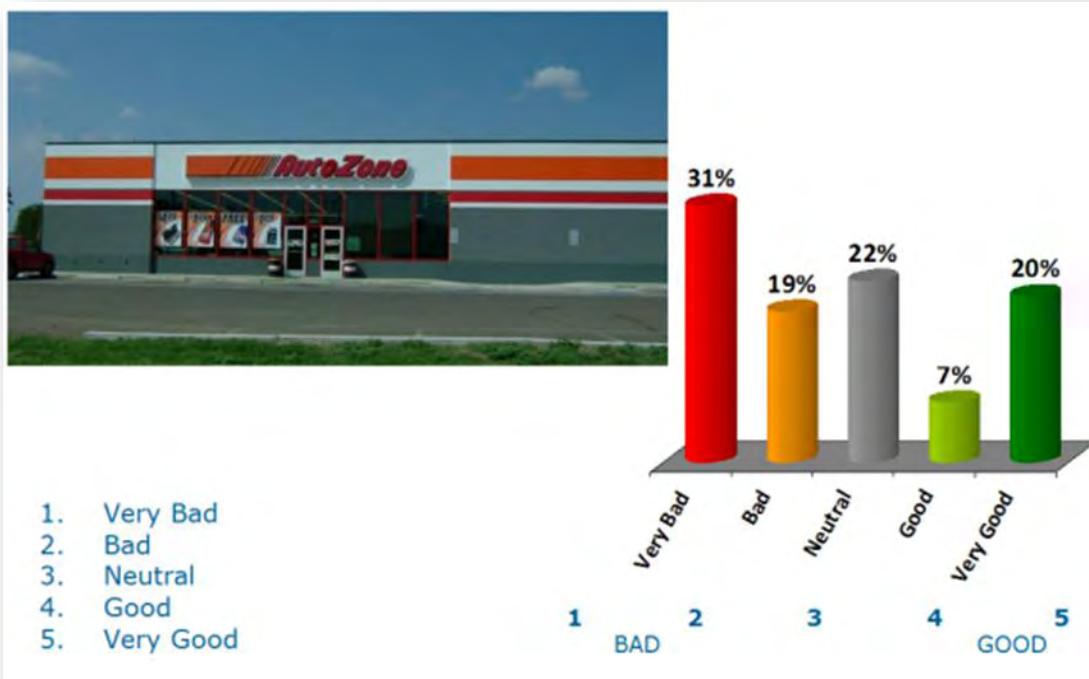


- Nearly two-thirds didn't like metal buildings with limited aesthetics.

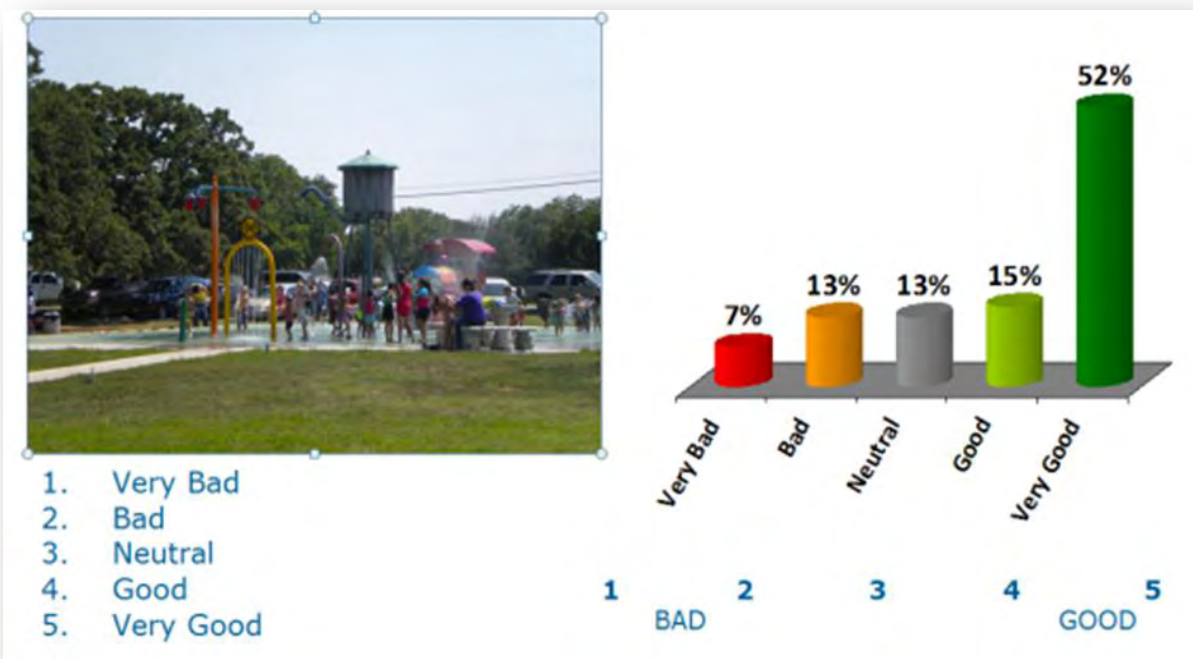


- Results here show similar opposition (68%) to a more dressed-up metal building even though it is a church.





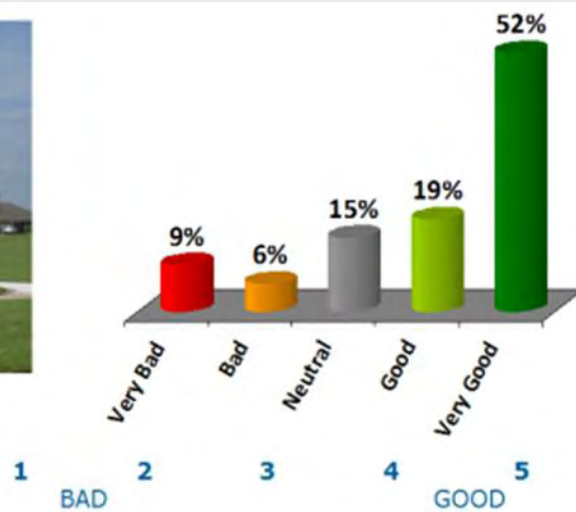
- This image of a typical auto store received divided opinions.



- An image depicting a gathering place with amenities, specifically a splash park (something for the kids), was highly valued.



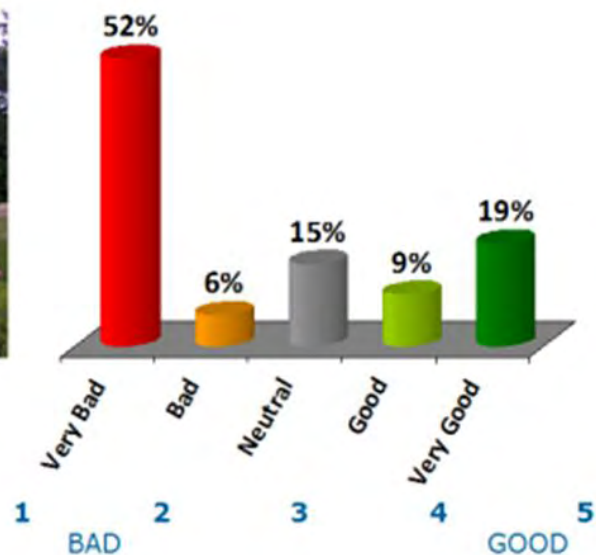
1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good



- A very high rating was given for the concept of some type of gathering place, a gazebo and open green space as shown in this picture.



1. Very Bad
2. Bad
3. Neutral
4. Good
5. Very Good

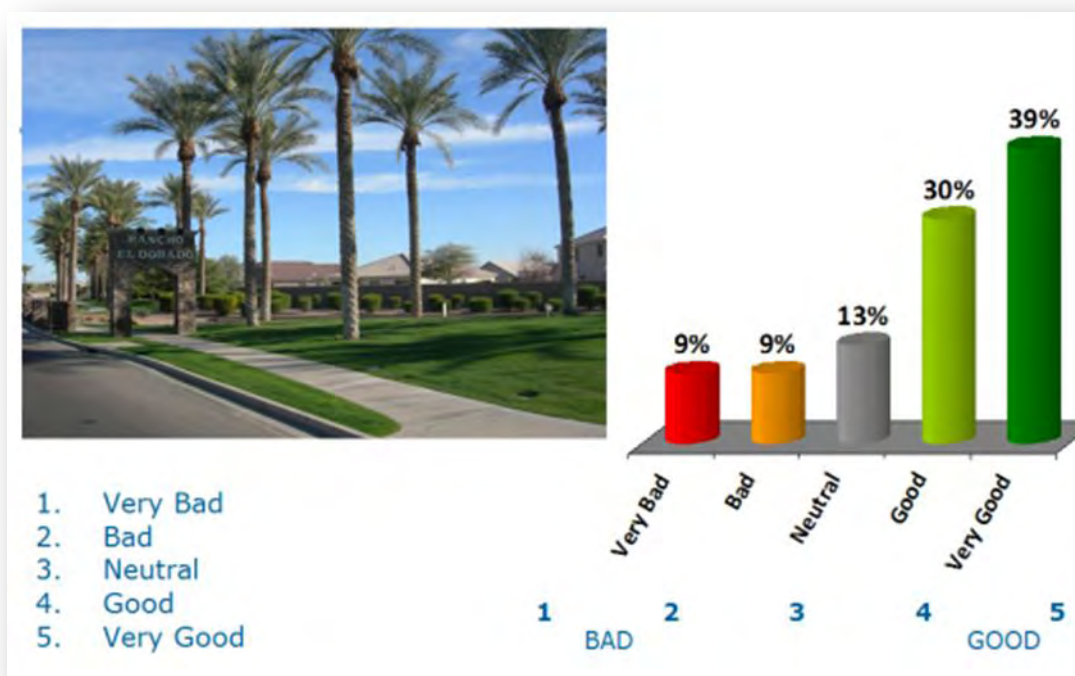


- This image shows a very clean, manufactured home, but the majority opposed it.

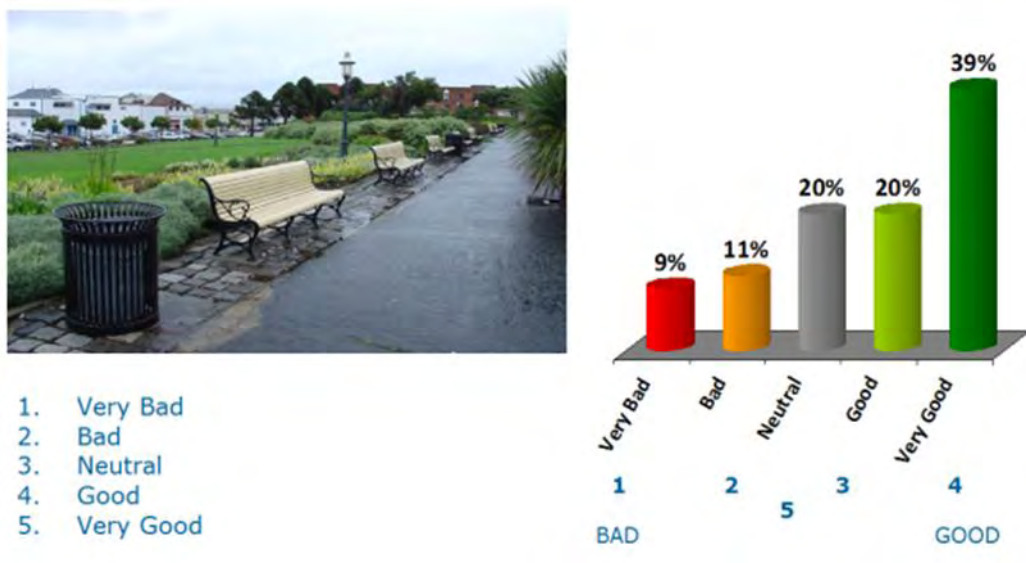




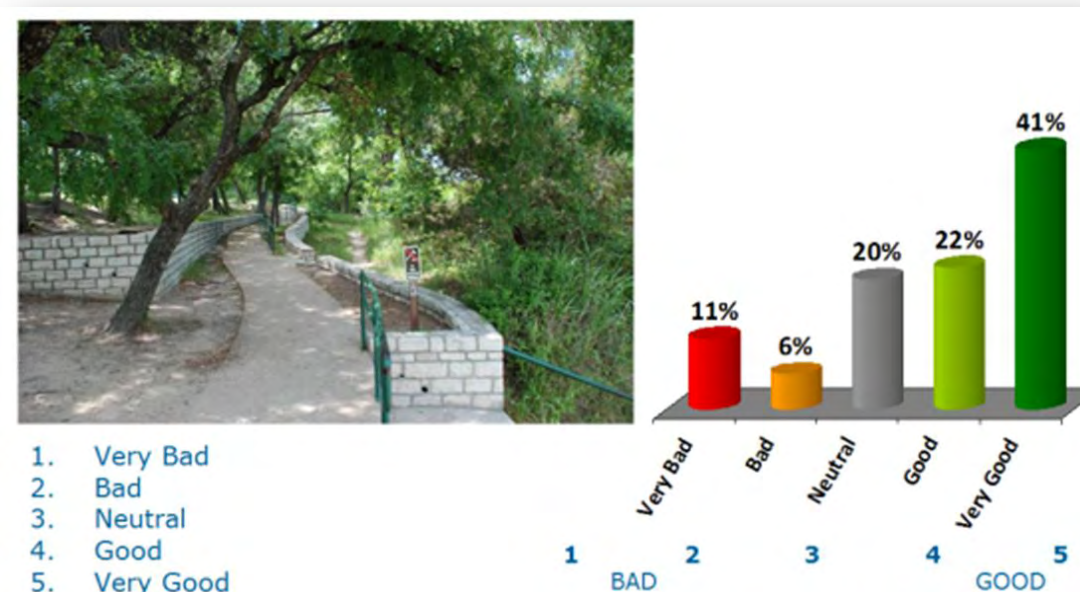
- The results from this image show divided opinions about different types of upscale residential development.



- Substantial support for residential development typical in Maricopa was expressed with this image (of Rancho El Dorado, an existing subdivision in the City).



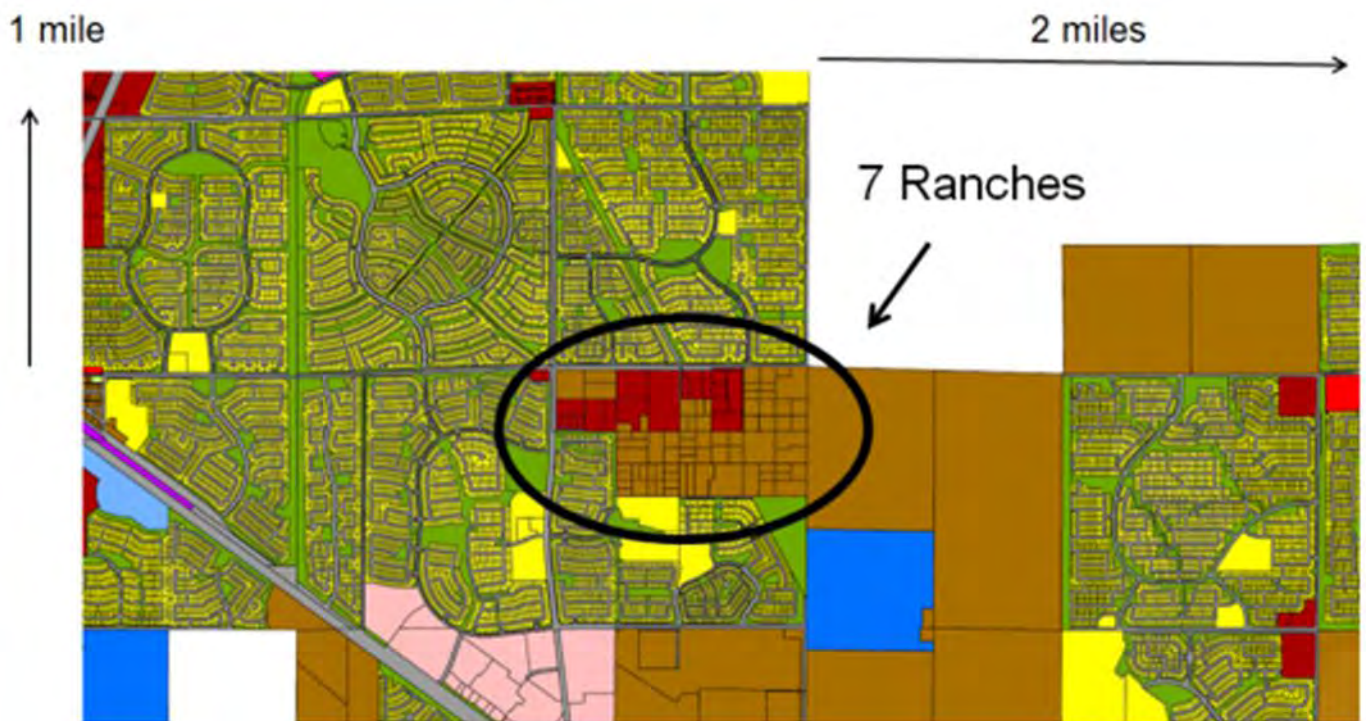
- Results from this image demonstrate a high acceptance of more formal open space and walks with street furniture.









- Nearly two-thirds of respondents liked the idea of more passive open space trails and walkability.

## Zoning

The predominant zoning in the area around Seven Ranches is single family (yellow) to the north, west and east, and “General Rural” GR (brown) to the west (refer to *Map 7 and 8* along with *Table 1* below). The closest retail or commercial (red), other than a small tract at the northwest corner is one mile to the north and 2 miles to the west. The “Catholic Diocese” tract to the south is also proposing retail. The pink zoning to the south is “CI-1” is a light industrial/warehouse zone, but will probably also develop with some commercial. It will take a market study, but with the limited amount of retail in the area serving approximately 6 to 8 square miles of residential, there may be demand for additional retail or commercial zoning in the area. At a minimum there has been testimony and letters received that some types of neighborhood service and gas stations are needed in the area.

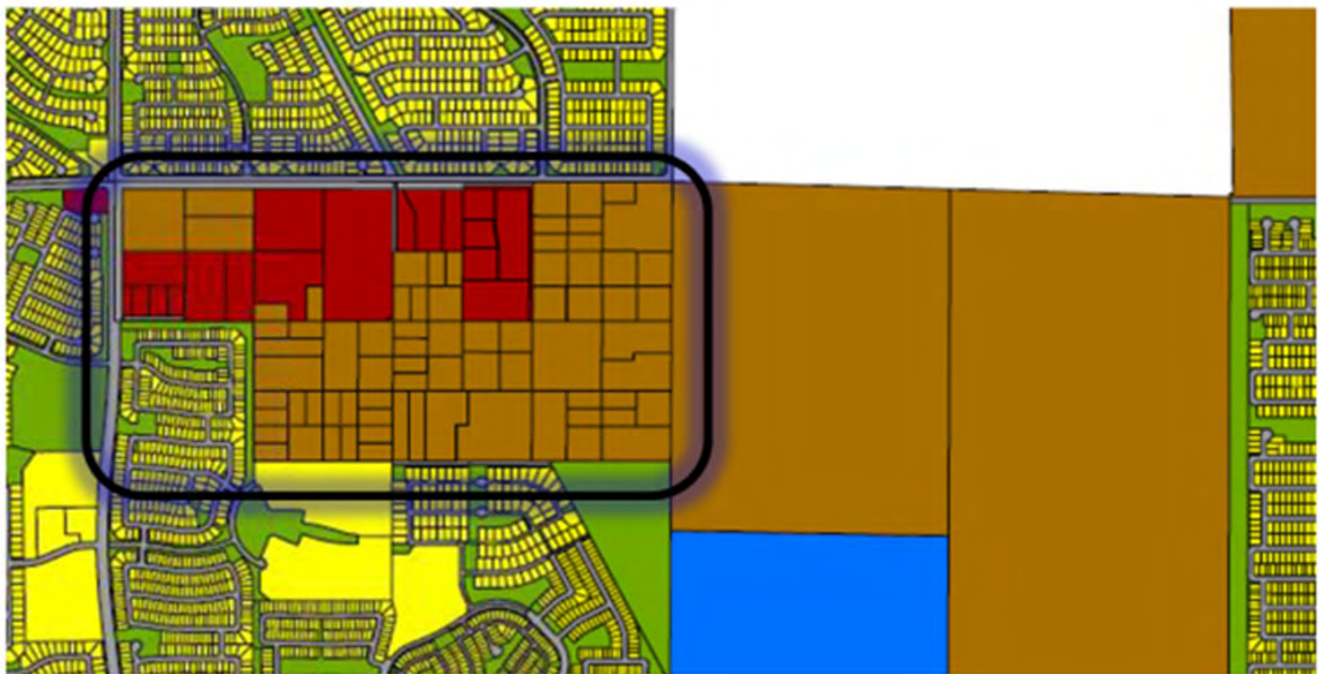


*Map 7: Zoning map of Seven Ranches and surrounding areas. The majority of Seven Ranches is zoned “General Rural” with a collection of lots on the north side zoned as “General Business.” Refer to *Table 1* below for the color-coded zoning definitions. Source: City of Maricopa*

<b>Table 1: Zoning Color Code Reference to Maps 7 &amp; 8</b>		
<b>ZONING</b>	<b>COLOR ON MAPS</b>	
General Rural (GR)	Brown	
General Business (CB-2)	Red	
Light Industrial/Warehouse (CI-1)	Pink	
Residential	Yellow	
Public / Institutional	Blue	
Park / Open Space	Green	



The majority of the tract is zoned “General Rural” (brown) which is the interim holding zone upon annexation, and no final zoning has been determined. The commercially zoned land (red) is CB-2 which is a “general business” zone and is in a unique configuration. The zone is a “heavier” commercial district allowing the same uses as the CB-1 Local Business Zone plus a number of other uses such as warehousing and even light industrial/assembly on a limited basis. Most of it is mid-block along the arterials Honeycutt and Porter. Retail and commercial tend to work better at the corners of two arterials with improved access and traffic counts. The mid-block configuration raises a question as to what the corners will ultimately be. In addition, with approximately 90 acres already zoned commercial (although 10 acres is used as a school), an additional 50 to 60 acres at the two corners would bring the amount up to approximately 140 acres of Commercial Business in the area. This is a substantial amount of business. The depth of the CB-2 along Honeycutt for the most part is over 1200 feet which again provides for extremely deep commercial tracts. The back portions of these tracts, as zoned, is probably only suitable for warehouse type activities, which again will set a “warehouse/industrial/heavy commercial” tone for the balance of the 280 acres and is probably not acceptable to all of the property owners and the adjacent residential areas. In addition, there is a substantial CI-1 Light Industry and Warehouse zone to the southeast, which has a more flexible zoning with better access and visibility, and therefore will probably absorb the more viable warehouse and industrial type uses. To summarize, the consultants have a serious concern with the amount of CB-1 zoning, how it is configured and what the possible end uses away from the arterials will be and their effects upon the balance of the tract.



*Map 8: Zoning map zoomed in on Seven Ranches (outlined in black). Refer to Table 1 above for the color-coded zoning definitions. Source: City of Maricopa*

## Existing Conditions in Seven Ranches

### 1. Parcelization

- a. There appear to be a number of different owners of small parcels.
- b. Some parcels are as small as 1 acre with the largest about twenty acres.
- c. There are approximately 27+ residences, which would give an overall density on the tract of about 1 unit per 10 acres.
- d. It is difficult to tell, some of them may be vacant or abandoned.
- e. There appears to be a number of parcels where manufactured homes or other structures have been moved off. Property lines and fence lines in some areas give the appearance of parcels having been acquired and assembled, particularly in the northeast corner and the southwest corner.

### 2. Circulation

- a. The area is laid on the typical 1 mile arterial grid, which provides a good framework.
- b. Intersections at the quarter mile (1320-foot spacing) work well with some type of a major arterial/major collector intersection providing signalized neighborhood access.
- c. The existing north south streets on the 40 acre parcel spacing (Whiskers, Gunsmoke and Continental) provide a good framework in the development.
- d. The only through street on an east/west basis is Cowpath, which is cut off by the subdivision to the west. In addition the school would preclude some type of intersection at Porter Road, 1300+ feet south of Honeycutt. Access to the west will eventually be needed.
- e. The two intersecting streets to the north form offsets with Whiskers and Continental that will need to be corrected when the properties on the south side of Honeycutt develop.

### 3. Water

- a. The existing water system, while constructed and funded for rural development, is now being asked to support more intense urban development.
- b. There is insufficient water pressure for fire hydrants within the Seven Ranches area, although additional storage and pump capacity could resolve the situation.
- c. Until this is resolved, little development can occur within the area.

### 4. Wastewater

- a. There is no wastewater in the area, and the current rural water system is incapable of financing and developing such a system.
- b. Until this is resolved, only development utilizing septic tanks may occur on the tract.

### 5. Drainage

- a. The only drainage is overland, mostly toward the northwest.
- b. There appears to be drainage capacity in the area with the drainage system along Porter Rd. and the Power Line easement to the north.
- c. There is no organized retention/detention of runoff.
- d. There is a floodplain affecting the properties along White and Parker. The properties to the north and south have resolved the floodplain issue.

Refer to *Drawing 1* below for reference.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS



Drawing 1: Existing Conditions in the Seven Ranches Area. Created by CPAT members: Craig Farmer, FAICP & Lance Schulte, AICP



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Roadways: Things to Think About

Possible roadway system:

1. In order for the area to develop/redevelop in a phased manner, the new roads should track the existing roads and property lines. This allows for property owners to share in dedication of necessary right of ways and participation in street costs. It also allows development around individual property owners that are not ready to sell or participate in development.
2. The 3 north/south roads will be important to phased development of the area.
  - a. Gunsmoke Road will be a significant access road because it is the only road that can link in with the development to the south providing connectivity between the two developments. Ultimately, it will probably be signalized if traffic warrants.
  - b. Whisker Road has lost some of its ability to function as an internal collector since it cannot connect into development to the south and the Adams signalized intersection on Porter. When the 40 acres adjacent to Cowpath Road develops, the developer/property owners can reroute the road to whatever alignment works best for them, as long as Whiskers and Cowpath are connected.
  - c. Continental needs the offset corrected at Honeycutt as shown. It would be very viable to go straight to Cowpath but with the power line easement, a difficult parcel to develop will be created. If properties are acquired to allow it, rerouting to Cinder as shown will create parcels with more development potential.
3. The east/west streets and access are problematic.
  - a. Cowpath extending all the way to Porter may have been a solution, and the curvilinear road system through the Catholic Diocese project may provide relief in the southwest corner provided it is sized correctly.
  - b. Road B extending through the development and extending to the west to Porter may have been a good solution to traffic from the development. Since that is not an option, a second solution would be to extend Road A to Porter. The 660 foot spacing may not provide enough stacking from Honeycutt. So, a right in and right out intersection may be necessary.
  - c. Road A extending east to Continental and eventually curving around to Cinder would provide a “backage road” at 600 foot depth, which might help traffic circulation within the development, especially if there are ultimately medians in White and Parker Rd and Honeycutt, with properties along both roads developing in small parcels.
4. The east/west road at the 40 acre line.

Refer to *Drawing 2* below for reference.

# ROADWAYS



Drawing 2: Existing roadways in the Seven Ranches Area. Created by CPAT members, Craig Farmer, FAICP and Lance Schulte, AICP



*Image 13: Looking north down Whisker Road in Seven Ranches. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

A major impediment to development is the dirt streets in private easements (see *Image 13* above). Paving the streets will be difficult without the property owners and City cooperating to get dedication of rights of way and financing of streets. The City may want to consider partially paving the three north south streets in exchange for the dedication of right of way. This will provide reasonable access to the majority of the properties. Individual properties could either finish their share of the paving and curb and gutter as they develop or cash escrow their share.

## Drainage

Drainage, especially on site retention will be a problem with the diverse ownership pattern.

1. Regional retention will be an issue unless someone aggregates enough land to provide it. The problem with multiple small ownerships will be providing on site retention connected up to other on site retention.
2. The flood zone along White and Parker Road can be resolved by elevating some properties and providing some detention and some on site drainageways. Retention pond and drainageway excavation can provide fill to help elevate some properties.
3. One way to accomplish it would be to do a drainage master plan for the multiple ownerships. Drainageways and retention ponds could also be provided down parcel lines so that multiple properties have access to the system, and benefit from the spoils for filling low properties.
4. The power line easement could be excavated similar to the one to the north to also provide drainage. The east/west drainageways could be interrupted and shortened up.
5. Utilizing the east/west drainageways and the power line easement could provide a pedestrian/bike system throughout the development, linking future retail and more intensive development to the east to the schools to the west and Catholic Diocese project to the south.

Refer to *Drawing 3* below for reference.



# DRAINAGE



*Drawing 3: Drainage in the Seven Ranches Area.  
Created by Craig Farmer,  
FAICP and Lance Schulte,  
AICP*

In developing the suggested drainage approach various conceptual alternatives were developed and evaluated. The alternatives indicated how drainage could be conceptually addressed and to find the best match with the conditions in Seven Ranches. An "edge wash" alternative (see *Drawing 4* below) concentrated drainage along the northern and western boundary to provide an attractive open space front door to Seven Ranches. This alternative required too much extensive collaboration between property owners and would be most suitable if Seven Ranches was under one common ownership.



*Drawing 4: A possibility for drainage in Seven Ranches, an edge wash.  
Created by Craig Farmer, FAICP and Lance Schulte, AICP*

A "shared ponds" approach looked at multiple property owners incrementally building drainage facilities that would ultimately be combined or collocated to create a larger shared drainage and open space areas that ultimately drain to the northwest. This concept could be expanded incrementally with some challenges and presented some issues relative to coordinating circulation and open space systems.



*Drawing 5: A possibility for drainage in Seven Ranches, shared ponds.  
Created by Craig Farmer, FAICP and Lance Schulte, AICP*



A "wash" concept reflected the natural wash pattern of Arizona. The wash concept could be better implemented on a more incremental basis and could serve as an open space network and amenity that could add more value to more of the existing and future Seven Ranches properties. The wash concept was then modified to correspond and work with the suggested grid circulation that reflects current property parcelization and create the suggested drainage and circulation concept. The coordination of circulation and drainage reflective of parcelization should enhance incremental implementation of a comprehensive concept that can enhance property values.



*Drawing 6: A possibility for drainage in Seven Ranches, a wash concept.  
Created by Craig Farmer, FAICP and Lance Schulte, AICP*

Drainageways could become pedestrian and open space amenities, even detaining some water, thereby increasing values of adjacent properties, and providing long term value (for example, see *Drawing 7 below*). Maricopa has a history of homeowner association (HOA) involvement in maintenance and ownership of such facilities. With numerous different owners, either the City or some other mechanism will probably have to be developed in order to own and maintain the facilities.



*Drawing 7: Rendering of a drainageway that provides both pedestrian and open space amenities and supports the property values of adjacent areas. Courtesy of Townscape, Inc.*

## Development Scenarios

### *Value Creation: Low*

There are advantages and disadvantages to “business as usual” development with the 280 acres. This assumes there is no overall zoning and coordination of development as in the Medium and High Value Creation Scenarios. Individual parcels come in, rezone and develop on a piecemeal basis similar to what has been happening currently.

#### 1. Advantages

- a. Development can take place on a parcel by parcel basis as individual owners desire to develop.
- b. The existing water system can be left intact.. Properties along the major perimeter roads may be able to “piggyback” on the fire hydrants and water pressures across the street. The ultimate solution is to get some additional storage and a pump with the provision of a water system and hydrants throughout the development.
- c. The issue of the wastewater system does not have to be addressed.
- d. Drainage can be on a parcel by parcel basis, with no regional system needed.
- e. Roadways can be dedicated and paved on a section by section basis as properties develop.
- f. It will take the least time and expense on the part of the City and the property owners.

## 2. Disadvantages

- a. Development will be extremely slow and will be a continuation of what is happening currently.
- b. The arterials will “strip” out with warehousing and other similar uses due to the lack of potential for more coordinated, upscale development.
- c. The interior properties will have to develop with uses that do not need a wastewater system and can get by on septic systems. Again, single family “rural” large tract type development with mixed in warehouse type uses will probably be the norm.
- d. Roadways will need to be more of a “rural” road section due to the lack of drainage, with no curb and gutter and parallel storage ditches.
- e. The flood plain will continue to be in place along White and Parker Road, because no regional solution is proposed and no one property owner can resolve the issue. Individual structures will continue to need to be elevated out of the flood plain.
- f. With no significant development potential, values will remain low, tax revenues will not support significant improvements to the road and drainage system in the area. Properties will be very slow to develop, the area will remain the same for a long time and individual owners will receive the lowest value creation on their parcel.

Refer to *Drawing 8* below for an illustration of development scenario one, low-value creation.

### *Value Creation: Medium*

Scenario two is the Medium Value Creation plan. In this scenario, the City takes the lead in zoning the property according to a development plan. No property owner association or assessment district is created to coordinate the individual property owners and provide funding for improvements on a large scale. In addition, the City plans out and develops an east/west drainage system for the entire area, which individual owners will dedicate their portion as properties develop. Water and wastewater issues will have to be resolved by the City and Water Corporation.

## 1. Advantages

- a. The overall zoning plan will develop some potential for development and coordinate the actions of individual owners
  - 1) Utilizing the backage road created by Road A and Cinder, a commercially viable corner is created at Honeycutt and White and Parker Rd. Potential developers/investors will need to be assured that development in the area will have protections in place for their investment through zoning, platting and development requirements.
  - 2) The properties midblock along Honeycutt could continue to develop with the uses that have already been established.
- b. The City can take the lead in resolving the water and wastewater issues, which will not require the property owners to cooperate in extension of lines, etc.
- c. The City can implement the drainage system discussed previously. Drainageways will be piecemeal as property develops but will ultimately connect up, thereby resolving floodplain issues and providing for more intensive types of development.
- d. Multifamily zoning (brown) on two 20 acre tracts is shown in Scenario 2 to also provide incentives for redevelopment. The multi-family tract along White and Parker will provide convenient housing for not only the students at the Community College but also for their employees and



those at the government center. While there may be opposition to multifamily housing, our experience is if there is not too much concentrated in any one spot, the market will remain strong and there will be a continuing demand for such units. As a result, they are maintained and do not negatively affect property values. The existing development pattern in Seven Ranches is having a negative impact on adjacent property values and redevelopment, even multifamily, will improve the situation. Additionally, our experience is that a density of 24+ units to the acre is a minimum for a long term viable project. The extra 4 to 6 dwelling units per acre allow the project be better maintained over time and to have more amenities including pools and recreation centers, carports and garages and extensive landscaping.

## 2. Disadvantages

- a. Development, even though better coordinated with a plan, will still be slower and more "piecemeal."
- b. Some of the existing commercial zoning between Road A and Road B is probably has limited viability due to access and visibility. Other uses such as single family residential may be more viable and provide more value to the property owners. Only a market study of potential uses can determine the proper amount of warehousing, retail and multi-family in the area. The City or the Economic Development Corporation may have to take the lead in financing such a zoning/market study.
- c. Roadways will develop more piecemeal and the City will have to take some leadership in coordinating their development.
- d. The Water and wastewater issues will need to be resolved by the City. The likelihood of a master developer stepping in and resolving all the issues is slim. The fragmented ownership will be a problem.
- e. Drainageways owned by City will probably not be intensively landscaped and made an amenity to the project. They will function with limited maintenance, however.

Refer to *Drawing 9* below for an illustration development scenario two, medium-value creation.

Hand-drawn map of a rural area showing property lines, roads, and various land uses. The map includes labels for 'Honeycutt Rd.', 'Stoke', 'PO', 'Quikmore', 'Water Co', 'Whiskers', 'School', 'Landscape', 'Power Line Easement', 'Continental', and 'White & Parker, Co.'. A legend at the bottom right explains the color coding for 'Value Creation - Low' and 'Seven Ranches Plans', with categories like 'Residential - Low', 'Medium', 'High', 'Commercial', 'Office', 'Public - Scenic - Quality', 'Other Land - Recreation', 'Planned', 'Unimproved Road', and 'Property Line'.

**Drawing 8:**  
Development scenario  
of Seven Ranches  
showing low value  
creation. *Created by  
Craig Farmer, FAICP and  
Lance Schulte, AICP*

## Development Scenario #2: Value Creation - Medium



Drawing 9:  
Development  
scenario of Seven  
Ranches showing  
medium value  
creation. Created by  
Craig Farmer, FAICP  
and Lance Schulte,  
AICP



### *Value Creation: High*

Scenario 3 will build on Scenario 2 and create the most value for the property owners. It will, however, require the City to take a lead role and also require significant owner participation.

1. Not only will the drainageway and detention/retention ponds be developed but they will be landscaped and pedestrian/bikeway/trails will also be provided. This will provide connectivity to the retail, the schools, the Community College and the Government center but will significantly increase the values of the area over Scenario 2.
2. All the public improvements in Scenario 2 will need to be developed/resolved.
3. A mechanism will need to be provided to own and maintain the common areas. While HOA's have been used in the rest of the City, this will have to be some type of Public Improvement District that can assess property owners and act like a HOA.
4. Village Center
  - a. The retail in the North-East corner could develop in more of a Village concept with the buildings fronting on an internal street with a commons area (see *Image 14* below as an example).



*Image 14: Example of the Village concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

- b. Parking would be on the outside perimeter. The narrow street would provide limited parallel on street parking.
- c. Buildings would have a “build-to” line that would insure they locate close to the internal street, thereby giving town or village feel (see *Image 15* below for an example).



*Image 15: Example of the Village Concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

- d. Substantial urban design treatments to the “commons,” the surrounding streets and the streetscape would give the area the feel of a “people place” (See *Images 16-17* below for examples).



*Image 16-17: Example of the Village Concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*



- e. Two story buildings should be encouraged to give an “urban” feel (see *Image 18* below for an example).



*Image 18: Example of the Village Concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

- f. If there is sufficient demand, there could be retail, office or even residential on the second stories of the buildings.
- g. There should be a common “architectural theme” to give the area a unique feel. The use of brick or other treatments may be preferred over the “desert” look that is prevalent throughout Maricopa.

## 5. Village Residential Multi-family

- a. Higher density quality multi-family could be developed as an amenity to the retail with pedestrian linkages to the retail village (see *Image 19* below for an example).



*Image 19: Example of the Village Concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*



- b. It would also be oriented inward around detention ponds and other open space amenities.
- c. The architecture would be compatible to the “retail village” to the north and augment the theme.
- d. The retail and multi-family would all feel “seamless” with good architectural controls in place on new development and coordinated public infrastructure (See *Image 20* below for examples of b, c, and d).



*Image 20: Example of the Village Concept. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

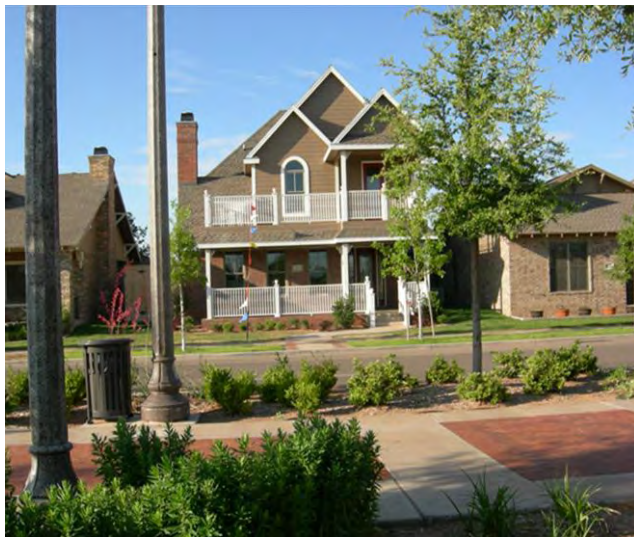
## 6. Medium density residential

- a. Many of the newer styles of development are encouraging connectivity of both vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles. Walled off developments with limited access to retail and other amenities are being shown, even by the real estate industry and the Urban Land Institute to be less livable and attractive to residents and employees.
- b. Long blocks, especially cul-de-sacs, are being discouraged in favor of shorter interconnected blocks that are very walkable.
- c. The medium density development of possibly townhomes or zero lot lines at the southwest corner of Road B and Cinder has been laid out so that every street is connected to another street and the retail and trail system. Rather than being walled off from the collector, lots would side lot to Cinder and Road B, again increasing accessibility and walkability (see *Image 21* below for examples of a, b, and c).



*Image 21: Example of the medium density residential. Photo by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

7. The balance of the tract has been laid out with more traditional single family, but in close proximity to a trail system laid out using the open space created by the drainage system. Again, even single family residential areas in close proximity to pedestrian usable open space will have increased values (see *Images 22-23 below for examples*).



*Image 22-23: Examples of single family residential areas in close proximity to open space. Photos by Craig Farmer, FAICP*

8. The Financing of public improvements will require City involvement, but will also require some kind of owner participation either through an assessment district or property owner association that can collect dues. A market analysis of the potential values if the development were to take place in accordance with this plan might provide the basis for funding the improvements. A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone might provide some funding of public improvements but in order for this scenario to work, assessments as properties develop will be needed to raise the development to a level that maximizes value and provide for long term maintenance of the common improvements.

## City of Maricopa

*"Embrace who you are, strive for what you want to become."*

Reaching a shared understanding among citizens and institutions about Maricopa's niche in the region, as well as what it wants to and can become, would seem to be a valuable exercise. We recommend the City initiate a community visioning and goal-setting process to get this conversation going.

Once the vision has been established, it is important that leadership—elected, business and community, gets behind it. In addition to focusing on what the City itself can do, it's important that allies—non-profits, organizations, academic institutions, and other potential allies should be enlisted. A key could be tapping the expertise of the City's retired residents, many of whom have extensive experience in various fields.

Create a better understanding of economic development and retail dynamics would also be helpful. The City and/or Economic Development Organization, or other partners could organize a speaker series and provide this type of information to the public in its various communications.

We recommend the City consider developing an overall housing assessment and strategy that addresses whether housing types and price points are a good fit with the overall vision.

We recommend the City come up with an overall plan for mobility and accessibility in terms of all modes. This could include the existing bikeways policy and trails plan, and also the identification of additional connections that would provide better access between residential areas and key destinations such as schools, parks and community facilities.

The City needs to move forward from the model of developer-driven infrastructure to strategic capital investment. A Seven Ranches master plan could be the starting point for such considerations. Property owners may also need to participate in the infrastructure costs. This could be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including a Public Improvement District, where the assessments would not come due on a property until it is sold.

For these initiatives to be successful, there will need to be an improved atmosphere for collaboration. We recommend the formation of a Seven Ranches Development Advisory Group, comprised of property owners, residents and other stakeholders, to be involved in the planning and implementation phases of any City-led redevelopment of the area. The City should also set up measures to ensure timeliness and accountability for delivery of their commitments on the project.

We also recommend the City identify a number of initiatives to generate interest and create some quick results. Some type of kickoff event, perhaps a barbecue, might be a good place to start. Tearing down dilapidated buildings, aesthetic treatments to the fencing on the north side of the site, and working to create a riding/hiking trail along the overhead electrical transmission lines are initiatives that could be completed



quickly without great expense that would enhance the value of Seven Ranches properties and build trust and collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

Seven Ranches will continue to be influenced by its surroundings and this influence will become greater over time. Seven Ranches has several locational advantages that can benefit Seven Ranches property owners and the City. However, these advantages can disappear if not nurtured and ultimately implemented. This will require a collaborative effort. Seven Ranches has constraints from fragmented parcelization, poor infrastructure, some abandoned and less maintained properties that negatively impact land values, and a lack of a comprehensive plan to coordinate incremental land development. These are challenges, but not insurmountable. The critical constraint in Seven Ranches is a mistrust that has prevented interested property owners, infrastructure providers, the City, and surrounding citizens, property owners and interest groups from collaboratively working together with respect and shared responsibility and contribution. Working together this group - the Seven Ranches Development Advisory Group - could start the dialogue to build trust, create some initial enhancements, and then advise on the creation of a comprehensive plan to address Seven Ranches physical infrastructure constraints and mutually promote land values. The CPAT has provided some concepts and ideas to begin that dialogue.

## MEET THE TEAM

### *Team Leader*

**Sue Schwartz, FAICP**



Sue Schwartz, FAICP has been a professional planner for more than 25 years most of that time working with neighborhoods to facilitate reinvestment in their communities. August 1, 2011 she was named Director of the Department of Planning & Community Development for the City of Greensboro, North Carolina where she has won numerous awards for her redevelopment efforts. She was the Project Manager for Southside, an infill Traditional Neighborhood Development of the edge of Greensboro's downtown which was recognized by the Sierra Club in 2005 in its "Building Better: A Guide to America's Best New Development Projects" report. Southside had previously won US EPA the 2004 Smart Growth Award for Built Projects and the American Planning Association's Outstanding Planning Award for Implementation in 2003.

She was also instrumental in focusing attention on East Market Street in Greensboro which was once the hub of the African-American business district in the city that had been the subject of urban renewal in the 1950's and 60's. These efforts included bring a team of volunteer planners to the corridor for 5 days of workshops and meetings with the community. As a result the East Market Street Development Corporation was created, at \$12.5 million streetscape and traffic management project was implemented and \$2.5 million in redevelopment funds were committed to the area to leverage private investment. She has been active in the American Planning Association at both the state and national levels. The many offices she has held include President of the North Carolina Chapter of APA, two terms on the American Institute of Certified Planners Commission, serving as Secretary-Treasurer all six years. From 2006-2008 she served as the President of the American Institute of Certified Planners, the professional institute of APA. During her tenure she has successfully launched the AICP Community Assistance Program which will provide planners pro bono to areas to work on social equity issues. She has a B.S. in Geography and Urban Studies from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Master of Arts from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. In 2003 Sue was inducted into the AICP College of Fellows, the youngest person to be inducted to date.

### **Craig Farmer, FAICP**



Craig Farmer, FAICP is Manager of Urban Planning for the consultant firm Freese and Nichols, Inc. He has over 30 years of public sector experience managing Planning, Public Works, Engineering, Storm Water, Building Inspection, and Transportation Departments as a Deputy City Manager or Department Head in the cities of Lubbock, Carrollton, Grand Prairie, and McAllen. Mr. Farmer serves on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Local Government Studies of the Center for American and International Law. He is a Fellow in the College of the American Institute of Certified Planners and has served on the National Board of Directors of the American Planning Association (APA), the Board of Directors of the Texas Municipal League and has served as president of the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association and the City Planner's Association of Texas.

Cities have won Texas Planning awards for 10 projects he was in charge of including five comprehensive plans, one unified development code, a zoning ordinance, a subdivision ordinance, and two redevelopment plans utilizing tax increment financing and public improvement districts. His work won a

national award for streamlining zoning and building regulations. He also has extensive economic development experience having successfully worked on seven TIRZ districts, six PIDs, and been involved in such projects as Lone Star Park, the Verizon Performing Arts Theatre in Grand Prairie, Starplex, and a \$500 million redevelopment project next to Texas Tech University. Craig holds a Bachelors of Business Administration from The University of Texas and a Masters of Urban and Regional Planning from Texas A&M University.

#### Lance Schulte, AICP



Lance Schulte, AICP is a Senior Community Planner with HDR involved in land use and transportation solutions. He has managed the planning for several innovative programs and projects involving integrating pedestrian and transit design into the fabric of communities and neighborhoods. These have involved coordination of rail, bus and shuttle transit with pedestrian, bike and open space networks and the economics and policy of community development. His management of several innovative projects have included a regulatory development plan creating a new 3 million square foot pedestrian-based town center, multiple TOD master plans, and a 2.2 million square foot central campus revitalization plan integrating 24/7 active land use and three transit modes. With 18 years of experience in local government, transit, university, consulting, and

the private sector he provides a perspective that innovative solutions can come from effective collaboration and a focus on sustainable pedestrian-based solutions to both site and neighborhood design. Lance earned Master of Urban and Regional Planning and Master of Business Administration degrees. He is a member and elected Commissioner of the American Institute of Certified Planners. As a member of the American Planning Association, Lance served in elected positions on both state and local boards. He has also taught Planning at the University of California Extension program.

#### Jeff Taebel, FAICP



Jeff Taebel, FAICP is Director of Community and Environmental Planning for the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC). Jeff Taebel oversees the community and economic development, disaster recovery, environmental planning, livable communities, socioeconomic modeling and sustainable development programs for the Houston-Galveston Area Council. His major accomplishments include: forming a broad coalition of local governments and organizations that secured major funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to prepare a sustainable development plan for the 13-county Houston-Galveston region; establishing H-GAC's *Livable Centers* program, which has provided funding for planning and infrastructure to create mixed use walkable places; instituting a pedestrian-bicyclist "special districts" program to promote planning and

reinvestment in communities to make them more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly; developing one of the nation's leading applications of the UrbanSim socioeconomic and land use modeling tool used for growth forecasting and scenario testing; leading a blue-ribbon panel in preparing H-GAC's *Foresight Panel on Environmental Effects* report—which includes detailed recommendations for local governments to adapt to the potential environmental effects of climate change; partnering with the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of the U.S.G.B.C. in putting on an education program for school district administrators, board members, facility managers, and Parent-Teacher Organizations to promote "green school" design and management practices. Mr. Taebel is a past President of the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) and has also served on the Urban Land Institute Houston District Council Executive Committee and co-



chaired its Sustainability Committee. His work has received local, state and national awards. In 2008, he was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Mr. Taebel received a Master of Urban Planning degree from Texas A&M University and a B.S. in Life Sciences at the University of Nebraska.

## PICTURE GALLERY

The following pictures were taken during the CPAT project. A short description is included with each picture.



During the initial visit, Team Leader, Sue Schwartz, FAICP and APA Senior Outreach Associate, Ryan Scherzinger (both pictured below on left), met with elected officials in a special joint session of the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss Seven Ranches. Also present was the City Manager, Brenda Fischer. The picture above shows members of the Maricopa City Council, including Mayor Anthony Smith, and members of the Planning and Zoning Commission just before the joint session began on the evening of December 19, 2011. Pictured below on right is Maricopa's Interim City Hall, where the Team conducted many of its stakeholder interviews and other work associated with the project. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger and Doris Fightmaster*

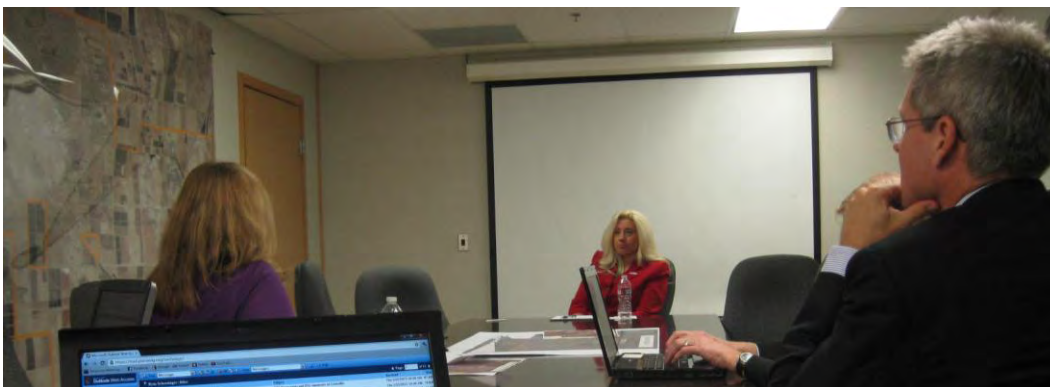


Below are pictures from the first community meeting the team held during its visit on February 22, 2012. Starting from the top left and moving clockwise: (1) Team member, Lance Schulte, AICP engaging residents about what concerns they have about the future of Seven Ranches; (2) Team member, Jeff Taebel, FAICP talking to residents about what their hopes for the area are; (3) Team leader, Sue Schwartz, FAICP talking with a couple of real estate professionals about the area; (4) Attendees at the meeting; (5) The community meetings were held at Sequoia Pathway Academy, a charter school located in Seven Ranches; (6) Team member, Craig Farmer, FAICP talking to residents about what barriers they see to development in Seven Ranches. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger and Craig Farmer, FAICP*





The Team spoke with a wide range of stakeholders, which included representatives from various utilities companies, developers, property owners, elected officials, city employees, journalists, advocates, residents, real estate professionals, and engineers. Below are pictures from just a few of the information-gathering and stakeholder interviews the Team conducted during its visit. Starting at the top: (1) Police Chief Steve Stahl and Fire Chief Wade Brannon discussed public safety issues with the Team; (2) Courtney Tyler, Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission, offered her perspective and answered questions from the Team; and (3) City Manager, Brenda Fischer, shared her insights and knowledge of the city. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*







*Left:* A view of the high voltage power lines that run through Seven Ranches. A walking/biking trail is proposed along its path in Maricopa's Open Space Plan.

*Below:* The United States Post Office building in Seven Ranches. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*





CPAT projects are very intensive. While everyone on the Team is briefed with as much information ahead of time as possible, the volunteer experts have a limited number of days “on the ground” in the community to assess the issues and deliver a set of recommendations. Above is the Team working well into the night as they discussed everything they learned during their visit and prepared the final presentation. Below are team members Lance Schulte, AICP (left) and Craig Farmer, FAICP (right) working on drawings for the final presentation and report. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*





The following three pictures are a look at some of the commercial development in Maricopa along AZ-347 (John Wayne Parkway), which is the City's primary corridor for retail and entertainment. *Photos by Ryan Scherzinger*

